

Introduction -

The incumbent serves as a Plant Protection and Quarantine Officer at a port and/or domestic work site with the responsibility for enforcing APHIS regulations. The Officer is under the supervision of a Supervisory Plant Protection and Quarantine Officer and works with relative independence in carrying out assigned duties and responsibilities.

Duties and Responsibilities -

Interprets and enforces foreign and domestic quarantines which may include pest detection survey, biocontrol, suppressive or eradication treatment.

Inspects ships, aircraft, vehicles, cargo, railway cars, mail, baggage, plants, plant products, and miscellaneous articles, (following standard PPQ procedures) for restricted or prohibited agricultural commodities, animal products and animal byproducts, and pests that may be dangerous to the nation's agriculture.

Reviews manifests, permits, certificates, invoices and other documents associated with the import of products, noting agricultural commodities on an inspection report based on the country of origin, type of commodity, pest risk, etc. Selects material for inspection according to risk assessment protocols. Using field techniques, recognizes the presence and/or symptoms of plant pests. Distinguishes between domestic and cosmopolitan pests and those that are potentially dangerous to the agricultural industry. From the results of inspections, makes decisions as to the subsequent action, such as: (1) release of non-prohibited products and materials, (2) determines the need for pre-entry treatments, and (3) refuses entry, movement and/or seize, destroy, or safeguard prohibited, restrictive, and infested materials pending final disposition.

Makes determinations on the enterability of all cargo of interest to PPQ. This requires knowledge of plant regulations, animal products and animal by-product regulations, and biological, pharmaceutical and plant product permit requirements, Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) regulations, and treatment requirements. Makes referrals to other government agencies, e.g. U.S. Customs Service, U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service, and Food Safety Inspection Service when applicable. Coordinates quarantine actions with cooperators, researchers, brokers, importers, and others on interpretation of regulatory guidelines pertaining to permit and general cargo. Issues animal product and by-products export certificates, phytosanitary and re-export certificates for plant products, and other certificates as necessary.

Inspects propagative plant materials for quarantine diseases and pests. Examines plants, soil, and seeds using a variety of methods and determines the proper disposition of the item. Coordinates quarantine actions with the state(s) and monitors post-entry requirements. Provides guidance to

researchers, brokers, importers, travelers, and others on regulatory requirements pertaining to propagative plants including regulatory requirements of other agencies, CITES covered plants, specialized treatments, and other post-entry actions.

Plans, conducts, and/or oversees various treatment such as disinfection, sterilization, fumigation, etc., of plant pests. Based on available information such as treatment manuals, determines and ensures the proper dosage, time of exposure, temperature, and safety conditions are met to avoid damage to the products; determines the appropriate measures to avoid damage to the products; determines the appropriate measures to eradicate the pests; and maintains safety equipment, gas detectors, and other supplies used in treatments. Monitors the effects of control operations and deposition on the area to be treated, target pests, sensitive sites, and other environmental components of the program. Ensures all actions of the contractor are in compliance with contract provisions. Resolves conflicts and concerns that may emerge from program operations.

Is the primary liaison for the Agency on operational activities, works with state officials, other agencies, industry, colleges and universities, and others interested in activities affected by Agency plant quarantine programs, in a large geographical area incorporating several counties and covering complex programs. Work requires independence of action and a thorough knowledge of all PPQ programs that operate in the area. Plans, coordinates and conducts, and analyzes and evaluates all program activities within assigned area. Researches questions dealing with unusual, unique issues and obtains, when necessary, answers/rulings from headquarters staff offices. Administers cooperative agreements and initiates and implements agreements unique to the area. Compiles data, maintains logs, and prepares reports on work unit operations.

Prepares, negotiates, monitors, and, when necessary, amends compliance agreements with Federal/State agencies, industry, catering services, cartage firms, nurseries, and/or other regulated organizations. Upon compliance with regulations, issues certificates or permits the movement of regulated articles. Independently conducts regulatory inspections at laboratories and in the field with regard to movement under permit of soil, genetically engineered or biological organisms. Submits written report of results to supervisor.

Is knowledgeable and uses computer programs such as ACS, AMS, IPM, APIS, AQI monitoring, EXCERPT, NAPIS, PIN-OPS, GPS/GIS, etc. The incumbent is expected to regularly access electronic information in order to maintain current knowledge of APHIS regulation and policy.

Coordinates and conducts surveys and inspections to determine the presence and density of plant pests and other environmental physical, biological, and ecological factors that may affect the injurious nature of plant pests.

May coordinate activities with U. S. Customs and Immigration officials and various military entities providing assistance to them as appropriate and required, e.g. blitzes and querying of passengers in animal disease outbreaks.

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Contacts landowners, farmers, nursery workers, warehouse workers, trade representatives, brokers, etc., relative to securing permission to conduct surveys, enforce quarantine regulations, and advise on PPQ programs and regulations.

With supervisory approval and direction, may coordinate the activities of personnel assigned to the work unit. This may include coordination of routine work assignments and daily work schedules, and instructing employees in specific tasks and job techniques, and giving on-the job training to new employees.

May perform in a temporary duty capacity, duties similar to those described above in connection with Emergency Program Operations.

When assigned, prepares site-specific environmental assessments in accordance with national environmental laws and regulations on the use of pesticides, biological organisms, or other technologies used in control and/or eradication activities. Cooperates with staff and State and local officials in preparing environmental assessments.

When required, prepares exhibits for and serves as an Agency's spokesperson during public events, such as fairs, career days, etc. Makes presentations at meetings of public service/civic organizations to deliver PPQ related information.

Adheres to Civil Rights policies, goals, and objectives in performing the duties of the position. Assures that written and oral communications are bias-free and that differences of other employees and clients are respected and valued.

Factor Levels

1. Knowledge Required By The Position - Knowledge of biological and agricultural science and of APHIS programs, activities, and regulations sufficient to : (1) independently apply established methods and procedures in the performance of survey, control, and regulatory work; and (2) generally recognize plant pests of environmental/economic significance.

Knowledge of farming/nursery operations, crops, and characteristics of parasitic plant pests (including insects and other plants) sufficient to effectively plan and oversee a control program in a designated geographical area.

Knowledge of substances such as fumigants, herbicides, and pesticides and the equipment associated with these substances sufficient to use them safely and effectively in plant protection and quarantine activities. Maintains current pesticide certification.

Knowledge of various treatment methods such as refrigeration, vapor heat, and dry heat sufficient to independently use these, or to evaluate the effectiveness of the application of such methods in carrying out treatment and control activities.

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Knowledge of the transportation and shipping industry's practices, procedures and carrier modes sufficient to enforce quarantines governing the movement of injurious plant pests, diseases, and animal by-products and to inspect various conveyances.

2. Supervisory Controls - The supervisor assigns the officer to a particular designated work area or project and provides instructions on changes in administrative policies or procedures.

The officer works relatively independently in carrying out assigned duties and responsibilities. Actions and decisions are generally made within the time frame of applicable guides and precedents. Considerable independent judgment is exercised in the case of an adverse decision which would result in a large unexpected expense or loss. Potentially controversial decisions are referred to the supervisor for concurrence.

Work is reviewed through formal or informal reports, discussions of actions taken, or through occasional observation of actual work performance. The work is reviewed for adequacy of results and adherence to established policies and procedures.

3. Guidelines - Guidelines include agency regulations, directives, manuals, treatment instructions, and other administrative guidelines, including those provided in electronic format. Guides include pertinent federal and state laws and regulations, directives, manuals, treatment instructions, textbooks or other scientific reference material, precedents, and current practice and policy.

The guides do not cover all problems, situations, or circumstances encountered. The Officer must use experience and judgment in applying the guides when taking necessary actions to prevent the introduction of plant pests and animal disease agents, or solving problems in surveying or regulating work.

4. Complexity - Assignments involve the inspection of cargo, baggage, railway cars, aircraft, ships, plants, plant material, and review of permits and certifications. Plans and conducts pest detection surveys to enforce regulations governing the movement of plant pests and field operations designed to control, suppress, or eradicate plant pests.

For inspection assignments, the officer considers such factors as the country of origin, the types of pests normally associated with a commodity, and the destination of the material and its end use. In planning various survey and regulatory operations, the officer considers such factors as resources available, degree of infestation, changing patterns of infestation, hazard of spread, and crops.

The work involves dealing with complicated pest or plant disease problems and/or the recurrence of local inspection, control or eradication programs. It requires the ability to adapt to a wide variety of methods and approaches.

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Actions are generally made within the framework of applicable guides and precedents. Complex situations are referred to the supervisor for solutions.

5. Scope and Effect - The purpose of the work is to enforce APHIS regulations in accordance with established criteria, which govern the movement of prohibited, restricted, and unrestricted plants, plant material, animal products and animal by-products, and which are designed to prevent the spread of exotic or emerging plant pests and diseases.

The work contributes to the health and marketability of agricultural and animal resources and to the public's understanding of the need for, and voluntary compliance with, agricultural and other quarantines. Additionally, farmers, ranchers, and the members of the public are protected against the effects of destructive organisms, such as insects, diseases and weeds.

6. Personal Contacts - Personal contacts are with the traveling public, including persons of various nationalities, socio-economic groups, and professional level; e. g., diplomats and associated official personnel, Federal, State, local and industry cooperators, importers and exporters, nursery personnel, ranchers, farmers, landowners, etc.

7. Purpose of Contacts - The contacts are established to enforce regulations: to explain methods, procedures, and objectives of APHIS Programs; to obtain voluntary cooperation of the interested parties; and to search for and locate plant pests. Usually, the people with whom the officer deals are cooperative, however, the officer is expected to use tact and diplomacy to overcome the resistance of persons who are reluctant to cooperate.

8. Physical Demands - The work requires physical exertion such as: long periods of standing at passenger baggage inspection counters, or sitting for long periods to perform microscopic examinations; recurring crouching, stooping and reaching while inspecting cargo, automobiles, vessels or other conveyances; climbing and descending ladders on vessels; long periods of walking, carrying equipment weighing up to 50 pounds; occasional handling of 55 gallon drums, fumigation tarps, farm implements and equipment, gas cylinders, bags of chemicals or other materials; and, as required, occasional riding in all-terrain vehicles in rough terrain and flying in small observation aircraft.

The incumbent may be required to use Self-contained Breathing Apparatus (SCBA) equipment.

The incumbent must possess a valid state drivers license and may be required to drive for extended periods of time.

This position will require travel and/or overnight travel, subject to the determination of management.

9. Work Environment - This position requires the incumbent to pass the appropriate security clearance as a condition of employment.

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Work schedules often require more than 40 hours per week. The work schedule may require night and/or weekend assignments and holiday work.

The work environment includes offices, farms, railroad yards, aircraft operation areas, airline passenger and cargo areas, and marine docks. Periods of outdoor work may be required in snow, rain, or extreme heat. Occasional periods of outdoor work may be required in remote areas with no modern comfort facilities. The work involves the use of toxic chemicals, pesticides and fumigants. Protective clothing may be required such as hard hats, gloves, goggles, hearing protection, respirators or SCBA.